

bill, may doom the overall bill; therefore, we would all lose as a result of it.

I say to my colleagues, we have a fresh opportunity here, a kind of fresh start. This institution is in need of a bipartisan agreement that solves some real problems, such as the cost of gasoline and home heating oil and other fuels the American people are facing. So it is not just that the institution would benefit in its credibility with a bipartisan agreement on this critical issue; the country needs us to show leadership on this issue. I am confident, as we begin this debate, we can rise to the opportunity.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin.

SOMALIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, later this week, Somalia's fragile Transitional Federal Government, also known as the TFG, is expected to convene a National Reconciliation Conference originally intended to negotiate genuine power-sharing arrangements, establish a credible political process, and prevent Somalia from descending back into chaos and lawlessness.

Unfortunately, this conference has been postponed again—for the third time. Equally disappointing is the failure of the TFG to take the critical steps needed to broaden its base and ensure genuine negotiations occur when, or if, the conference actually takes place.

I have been watching Somalia closely for quite some time and I am deeply concerned that the small window of opportunity we saw earlier this year is closing quickly—if it has not already closed. To date, the power struggle between the Ethiopian-backed TFG and various clan-based and extremist militias in Mogadishu runs parallel to a brutal crackdown by Ethiopian and Somali troops that led to enormous civilian deaths and displacement. The increasing prevalence of suicide bombings and other guerilla tactics is a serious setback for Somalis, and for our own national security interests on the Horn.

The United States should be encouraging and supporting efforts to facilitate a government in Somalia that is widely perceived—internally and externally—as legitimate. Unfortunately, this effort is complicated by the Administration's flawed and self-defeating approach to counterterrorism. By bringing long-term stability to Somalia, we can help root out global terrorists who thrive on instability and weak or failed governments. Pursuing individual terrorists is not a substitute for addressing the conditions that allow safe havens to persist.

There is no quick and easy answer to Somalia's problems. But there are a few things we can, and must, do better if Somalia is not to descend further into a bastion of instability with po-

tentially dire consequences for our national security and that country's future. We must redouble our efforts and work with international and regional communities—and in particular with the Ethiopians—to ensure this National Reconciliation Conference not only occurs, but that it brings together a broad range of actors to create a framework for a government that is capable and committed to overcoming divisive clan dynamics, protecting human rights, and isolating and eliminating elements of extremism.

The United States has been forthcoming with financial resources for this conference, as newly appointed Special Envoy to Somalia Ambassador John Yates recently reported. Indeed, we are supplying half of the conference's budget through the United Nations Development Program. These resources are significant, and while I encourage other donors to step up to the plate before it is too late, financial assistance is not the only deficit Somalia's political project faces.

Equally worrisome is the lack of consistent messages from the international community as to what this conference is expected to achieve. I am concerned that the focus on getting the conference up and running—while critical—has nonetheless sidelined the need for it to produce the blueprint—the blueprint—for rebuilding Somalia.

Along with appointing a new diplomat and providing substantial funds, this administration, as well as the broader international community, needs to set clear expectations for the TFG to make sure recent history in that country is not repeated.

It is important to note that these are only the latest efforts to cobble together a viable political path for Somalia. Over the past decade, there have been approximately 14 other similar initiatives, all of which have failed. If the fragile political space created by the TFG closes, we are going to be stuck back at square one with the same disastrous results we have been dealing with for more than 10 years.

The upcoming reconciliation conference is only one benchmark of steps forward for the TFG. It is critical that all Somali stakeholders are included and that they own the process, that international organizations are invited to observe and offer advice, and that an outcome document laying out a roadmap for a sustained and pervasive process is produced.

Even if this public event meets all these goals—which remains far from clear—to be truly successful, it must also set the stage for what will be needed down the road, including the restoration of infrastructure and institutions required in a functioning state, the provision of services and security to citizens, and the weaving of Somalia's complex social fabric into a viable civil society.

The road to peace and security in Somalia is long and riddled with obstacles, but we must not stray from the

goal. This most recent postponement illustrates the consequences of insufficient influence and inadequate policy coordination by the U.S. and the international community.

Accordingly, we must strive to produce a cohesive policy and effective action by clarifying our objectives, coordinating closely with our allies, and creating benchmarks with consequences. The United States and others—especially Ethiopia—must use whatever leverage they still possess to demand and work toward demonstrable progress towards a sustainable political solution for Somalia.

Mr. President, I certainly thank the Senator from Washington for her courtesy in letting me go first.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

ENERGY

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor, like many of my colleagues today, to talk about the direction—I should say new direction—we need in our energy policy. I know the President of the United States is coming up to meet with my Republican colleagues for lunch today and to talk about both immigration and energy policy. I hope the President will emphasize how important it is we get an energy bill but certainly that we get an energy bill that sets a new direction in America.

Obviously, the history and strength of our Nation lies in our ability to continually invent new ways of doing things. We are great as a nation in doing that. Whether it is building the most reliable electricity grid in the world, laying down a massive Interstate System, or helping to create the Internet, our people have marched forward in new, breathtaking directions. These achievements have historically provided our Nation with immense prosperity and a quality of life we all cherish.

The problem is our basic energy and transportation system is 50 to 100 years old. Today, we are faced with two choices: whether we are going to continue to operate the energy system that is a relic of the past century or we are going to create a new roadmap for the future that will allow Americans to again be global energy leaders. It is that simple.

Some will say our energy and transportation system is working fine and we should leave it the way it is. We have a lot of special interests swirling around Washington, DC, right now hoping we do not make much progress. But I would say we do not have to look any further than the pocketbook of Americans to know we are feeling severe impacts on our economy and our environment, and that doing nothing is not an option.

We are selling out too much in saying we cannot make aggressive change. We are shelling out too much to fill up